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# THE HISTORY OF PEWS

## A PAPER

READ BEFORE

*The Cambridge Camden Society*

ON MONDAY NOVEMBER 22 1841

WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING A REPORT PRESENTED  
TO THE SOCIETY ON THE STATISTICS OF PEWS

ON MONDAY DECEMBER 7 1841

“THE CHURCHES OF GOD DID AND DO DETEST THE PROFANENESS THAT IS  
AND MAY BE COMMITTED IN CLOSE AND EXALTED PEWS”

Pocklington's *Altare Christianum* p. 25

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M DCCCXLI

“If there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment, and ye have respect unto him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?”



THE  
HISTORY OF PEWS.

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THE subject on which the Committee have requested me to offer, this evening, some remarks to the Society, is one so interwoven with the internal arrangements of our churches, so directly bearing on the reverent performance of our services, and so powerfully influencing, not the taste alone, but the devotional feelings of our worshippers, that, uninviting as it may at first sight appear, we are in fact deeply interested in it. And I was the more willing to lay before you whatever information I may have been able to procure on it, because PUES<sup>1</sup> have never yet found an historian. Nor need we wonder at this. For what is the HISTORY OF PUES, but the history of the intrusion of human pride, and selfishness, and indolence, into the worship of GOD? a painful tale of our downward progress from the reformation to the revolution: the view of a constant struggle to make Canterbury approximate to Geneva, to assimilate the church to the conventicle. In all this contest, the introduction of pues, as trifling a thing as it may seem, has exer-

<sup>1</sup> I have ventured, in this word, to return to the original orthography, supported as it also is by analogy; retaining of course, in extracts, the spelling adopted by the author quoted. See below p. 6.

cised no small influence for ill; and an equally powerful effect for good would follow their extirpation. Hence it is that, from the first moment of our existence as a Society, we have declared an internecine war against them: that we have denounced them as eyesores and heart-sores: that we have recommended their eradication, in spite of all objections, and at whatever expense: that we have never listened to a plea for the retention of one; for we knew well that, if we could not destroy them, they would destroy us.

And herein we have but trodden in the steps of the holy Martyrs and Confessors of the seventeenth century, who sealed the Church's cause with their blood against those who "turned religion into rebellion, and faith into faction." They not only denounced in their writings, in their sermons, in their charges, in their articles, these innovations; but against more than one of them it was made matter of accusation and persecution that he had done so.

It has been my object, in the following paper, to connect the History of Pews with that of the various changes which our Church has experienced; and scanty as the notices which I have been able to collect may appear to some, I may assure the Society they have been procured at the expense of no little labour, and with the sacrifice of no little time; and this too in a place which affords every advantage for research. It is evident that all we can now learn of pews must be picked up on the one hand from the personal inspection of churches, and on the other from a careful perusal of visitation articles, injunctions, party-pam-



phlets, plays, trials, satires, and publications of a like ephemeral character, only to be found in large and valuable libraries. I have looked through many hundred tracts of this nature in the Publick Library, and have been obliged to consider myself well off if two or three hours' research has helped me to one fresh notice or allusion. The best collection of the kind, not only in Cambridge, but perhaps in England, is to be found in the Library of Trinity College. Some benefactor has, at great cost and trouble, made an invaluable collection of political and theological pamphlets, put forth between 1638 and 1648. And these he has for the most part arranged so as to throw mutual light on each other. For example: Does Parliament publish an ordinance for "seeking the LORD" by a solemn fast on Christmas Day? Bitterly in the next pamphlet does the *Mercurius Rusticus* inveigh against so unheard-of a piece of profanity. Does the great parliamentary bookseller, "Michael Sparke, "living in Green-harbour in the Little Old Bailey," publish "*Groans of our Sion; or a comfort for afflicted Protestants*"? Leonard Lichfield of Oxford, and Richard Badger in Cornhill, the Parker and the Rivingtons of their day, hasten to reply to it; the one in "*A Rod for the foole's back;*" the other in "*The Devil at Geneva.*" Such are the sources whence the following pages have been compiled.

My first business will be to prove that pews were not in use before the Reformation. And here I know that I am opposed by the opinions of some whose judgment on such points has, and that most deserv-

edly, great weight amongst us. I know also how hard it is to prove a negative. Yet I trust that I shall be able to make the Society think with me on this point at the outset; because it is one of great importance in the future progress of our enquiry. Let us examine, in the first place, the arguments which my opponents are wont to produce.

They bring forward the use of the word *pue-fellow* from Richard III, Act iv. Scene 4:

“And makes her *pue-fellow* with others moan.”

From Decker's *Westward Hoe*:

“Being one day in church she made mone to her *pue-fellow*.”

And from the *Northward Hoe* of the same author:

“He would make him a *pue-fellow* with lords.”

Now since they lay so much stress on these passages, I will help them to another, pointed out to me by Archdeacon Hare, himself a determined enemy of pues. It occurs in vol. II. p. 91 of the new edition of Bishop Andrewes's sermons in the Library of Anglo-Catholick Theology:

“Look how Esau speaketh, ‘I have enough, my brother,’ and as his *pue-fellow* here, Anima habes, Soul, thou hast enough,” etc.

The sermon whence this is taken was preached in Lent, 1596; and Richard III. is supposed to have been written in 1591. Now, say the supporters of the theory I am opposing, if the term *pue-fellow* was then so common as metaphorically to be applied to any close companionship, pues must have been known at a much earlier period.

Now we will discuss the true meaning of this curious word presently: at present I will only observe, that if this argument proves anything it proves too much. Pues are, unfortunately, common enough now-a-days; yet not so common, but that to call a dear friend a very intimate pue-fellow would be ridiculous in the extreme. Therefore if *pue* meant then what it does now, pues must have been in much more general use, and much more generally talked of than now, otherwise the metaphor would have been almost unintelligible. But that they were so general their warmest advocates will hardly assert.

This compound then can be brought to prove only thus much; that the word pue existed before the Reformation. And this I most willingly allow.

The Latin word *podium*, whence the Dutch *puye*, *puyd*, and the English *pue*, are derived, has, as I need not tell the Society, two meanings. The more common signification is the seat in the theatre next the orchestra, or in the amphitheatre next the arena; but it also means a heap of stones. In proof of this latter interpretation, Facciolati quotes a passage from Columella, where that author makes *podia* synonymous with *lapidei suggestus*. And, accordingly, the word in English has retained both meanings; though I only know one instance in which it bears the latter. In Westminster<sup>1</sup>, as early as the time of King Edward III., was a famous chapel, called The Chapel of OUR LADY OF THE PUE. The title is certainly at first sight puzzling; but when we read further that this

chapel was built in a marshy soil, where huge heaps of stones had to be thrown in before the foundation could be laid, we are naturally led to think of the *podium* of Columella, and to wish for some authority for deriving the one from the other. And this the Society may not be aware that we have in the provincial word *Pod*, as applied to the heaps of stones laid by the side of the road for the purpose of mending it.

I will now bring forward some passages in which the word *pue* is used,—not, be it remembered, for a single seat, but,—for a row of seats, or bench<sup>1</sup>.

The earliest use of the word with which I have met occurs in a contract of 1458, to make seats, called *puying*. Here the term is explained for us.

My next instance is from the parish-accounts of S. Margaret, Westminster<sup>2</sup>. In 1509 this item occurs, “Of Sir Hugh Vaughan, Knight, for his part of a pew, 6s. 8*d*.” And again, in 1511, “Of Knight the courtier, for his wife’s pew, 2s.” But there were no pues in our sense of the word in S. Margaret’s church till after the fire of London, when it seems to have been pued in imitation of the then newly-erected churches of Sir C. Wren; hence it follows that the pues of Sir Hugh Vaughan and Mistress Knight must have been seats.

I will bring you down 130 years lower, and the

<sup>1</sup> A curious passage is quoted in the last number (cxxi) of the *British Magazine*, p. 676, from Piers Ploughman, where pues are mentioned: the context does not *prove* that the word here means seats, though there can be no doubt that it does.

<sup>2</sup> *Gent. Mag.* LXIX. p. 838.

case is the same. In *The Life of Dr Peter Heylyn*, by George Vernon, 1682, we read, p. 70, that the Dean of Westminster did on the 8th of February, 1636, put in his claim for his seat in a great pue. He was opposed by Dr Heylyn, on the plea that this pue belonged solely to, and was occupied by the Canons. Now as there never was any pue in the modern sense in that abbey-church, the meaning is evidently this: Dr Williams, in addition to his decanal seat, wished to possess himself of one stall in the row of prebendal stalls; an encroachment as vigorously as successfully opposed by Dr Heylyn<sup>1</sup>.

Advancing four years later, we find the same use of the word. In a scarce tract called *The Voice of the LORD in the Temple*, published in 1640, and giving an account of the strange accidents occasioned by a thunder-storm which happened on the Whitsunday of that year, in the parish church of S. Antony, in Cornwall, near Plymouth, we are told that two women sitting in the Chancel in one pue were overturned. Now how a pue in our sense of the word could be upset, it is not easy to understand: and when we further remember that it was Communion Sunday, and that it has always been usual on that day to have (when there are no stalls) benches in the Chancel, in which part of the church these women were then sitting, we can have no difficulty in understanding how the word is here to be taken.

Sixty nine years afterwards,—that is, as late as 1709,—we find the word used in the same way. In

<sup>1</sup> See note A. at the end.



a pamphlet published that year under the title of *The Cherubim with the flaming sword, or Remarks on Dr Sacheverell's late Sermon before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, in S. Paul's*, is the following passage: "If your Lordship and Sir Francis had "been breaking down the pulpit, overturning the "pews, brandishing the city-sword, crying out—The "Pret—der! the Pret—der! there had been some cause "for alarm." [p. 2.] Who does not see, that the pews here must mean the benches in the middle of the Choir? For to upset the galilee, which bears some distant resemblance to pews, had been a feat somewhat above the strength of his Lordship and Sir Francis together.

Thus I have proved to you that for 350 years, *pue* bore occasionally the sense of bench: and this even, when by the common introduction of square pews, the sense was likely to be lost. It follows then, that unless the advocates of ante-reformation pews have some better argument than the name, their cause can hardly support itself.

And now to return to the word *pue-fellow*. In King Lear, which was probably written in 1605, Edgar, as Mad Tom, says, "Who gives any thing to "poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through "fire and through flame;—hath laid knives under "his pillow, and halters in his *pue*." Now no one, I am sure, can ever have read this passage (which all the commentators pass over *sicco pede*) without thinking, while taking the last word in the sense of a church-pue, that it was a very strange place for the



foul fiend to deposit a halter. We are further to remember that the whole of Mad Tom's character is a satire on the pretended possession<sup>1</sup> of John Darrell and others. In the examination of these wretched creatures, we find that knives and halters were said to have been laid under their beds and in their chairs. Here we get near the meaning: but still, as I before observed, pue never meant a chair, but a bench. Now, when we are told that to this day in some parts of England those large moveable seats in alehouses, which have a back both above and below, to keep off the wind, are called pues; and when we remember that Edgar afterwards says of himself, "Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly," our chain of evidence will be complete; and we shall have no hesitation in setting down the pue in the above passage as an ale-bench, where a halter might well have been laid; and pue-fellow will then mean a boon companion. Now our difficulties are solved; for pue having for the most part lost this sense, pue-fellow has of course fallen into disuse. And fond as Bishop Andrewes was of country words, there is no reason why he should not have used this, especially when custom had given it a sense rather wider than its original meaning.

But of course all arguments whatever must give way to facts. If the advocates for early pues can point out one clear and undisputed instance, where such a thing occurs before the Reformation, it will prove much, though not perhaps so much as they assert.<sup>2</sup> There are

<sup>1</sup> See *Illust. Mon. Brass.* part 1. p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> See note B. at the end.

instances, however, where pews may be found with Perpendicular or even Early Decorated work cleverly veneered on to their sides; and it is possible that such may have been mistaken for Perpendicular or Early Decorated pews.

But, say our opponents, our not finding ancient pews proves nothing against their existence; because they, like so much other ancient wood-work, may easily have been destroyed. Let us look at the case according to this hypothesis. There were then two kinds of accommodations for worshippers,—wood-seats and pews. The former fell into disuse; the latter increased and multiplied. And yet it is the former which are preserved, and the latter which have perished!

Finally, I will just allude, (and only just, since it will form the subject of a future paper) to an objection against all ante-reformation square pews; the universal custom of praying towards the east, which these square boxes would have rendered a thing impossible.

Let us, before we consider the use of pews, say a few words on the way in which worshippers were accommodated before the Reformation. In Anglo-Saxon churches, and in some of early Norman date, for example, Compton S. Nicholas, Surrey, there is a stone bench running round the whole of the interior, except the east end. This was probably occupied by the congregation; for there does not appear to have been at that time in our Church so strict a law against the laity, or even women, entering the Chancel as there afterwards was. At least such appears the natural inference from the 44th constitution of king Edgar, pub-

lished in A.D. 960: "And we ordain that no woman shall approach the Altar while the Mass is being celebrated." This of course implies that at any other time a woman might do so. Judging from Anglo-Saxon illuminations, the rest of the people sat on low, rude, three-legged stools, placed dispersedly all over the church. And probably no immediate difference was made by the Norman Conquest; though from that time the introduction of wood-seats appears gradually to have been accomplished. In Bishop Grostête's injunctions, (1240), it is ordered, that the patron may be indulged with a stall in the Choir. And in the twelfth chapter of a synod at Exeter, holden by Bishop Quivil in the year 1287, we read as follows<sup>1</sup>:

"We have also heard that the parishioners of divers places do oftentimes wrangle about their seats in church, two or more claiming the same seat; whence arises great scandal to the church, and the divine offices are sore let and hindered: wherefore we decree, that none shall henceforth call any seat in the church his own, save noblemen and patrons; but he who shall first enter shall take his place where he will."

The next notice I have found of church-seats occurs in the year 1470; when an action being brought about a claim to a particular seat, a consultation was issued to the Bishop of Hereford to take measures in favour of the claimant; a consultation being an injunc-

<sup>1</sup> Item audivimus, quod propter sedilia in Ecclesia rixantur multoties parochiani, duobus vel pluribus unum sedile vindicantes: propter quod grave scandalum in ecclesiam oritur et divinum sæpius impeditur officium.  
WILKINS, I. 123.

tion to the Ecclesiastical Judge to proceed notwithstanding a previous prohibition.

And here I may observe, that very little information is to be gained from the law reports of particular cases like the above. They divide themselves principally into two classes: one, where right of prescription by occupation for forty years is claimed, together with a proof that the seat has been, during that time, kept in repair by the claimant: the other, where the same right is urged, without the latter addition. In the former case judgment has always been given for the claimant; in the latter, the decision of different authorities has been very different; as a reference to Ayliffe's *Parergon*, or Burns' *Ecclesiastical Law*, will soon evince.

In descending to the Reformation, it is necessary to remember how different was the then state of our parish-churches from their present condition. There were no pews, as we have seen; no reading-desk, often no pulpit; the old Altars for the most part in parish-churches and in all cathedrals remained: for it must always be remembered that these, by the so often and so triumphantly quoted injunction of Queen Elizabeth, were not ordered—only, under certain restrictions, allowed—to be removed: in some instances a table stood lengthwise at the east end; and in others, was brought down into the Chancel or Nave, where even our present rubrick permits it to stand. In this latter case; Matins and Evensong seem to have been read from it; in the former, I suppose that a lettern was used, being placed where the priest could best be heard.

I will now endeavour to trace historically the gradual intrusion of pue, reading-pue, gallery, and the other encumbrances of modern churches.

In king Edward's first Prayer Book, the Priest is ordered to be in the choir; but Bucer having declared the order an act of high treason against GOD, the injunction in the second places him in such place of the church, chapel, or chancel, as the people may best hear.

In Archbishop Parker's Primary Articles (1559) we find no traces of any innovation in practice.

Ten years later occurs the first hint of a reading-pue. Bishop Parkhurst, in his Visitation Articles for the diocese of Norwich (1569), orders,

“That in great churches where all the people cannot conveniently hear their minister, the churchwardens and others, to whom the charge doth belong, shall provide and support a decent and a convenient seat in the body of the church, where the said minister may sit or stand, and say the whole of the Divine Service that all the congregation may hear, and be edified therewith; and that in smaller churches there be some convenient seat outside the Chancel-door for that purpose.

Two years later (1571) the Archbishop of York orders that the Epistle and Gospel be read from the pulpit<sup>1</sup>, where prayers are wont to be said.

In Bishop Cox's first set of Articles, enquiry is

<sup>1</sup> It seems doubtful whether this word is here used in the common sense; or whether it refers to the reading-stand, which had probably as yet acquired no distinctive name.



made about the pulpit, but nothing said of the reading-pue (1573.)

Archbishop Grindal (1580) by his first question shews that he knew of no such accommodation as a reading-desk. The minister here is simply ordered to turn himself so, and to stand in such place of the Church or Chancel, as the people may best hear.

Next<sup>1</sup> year (1581) we read that a gallery was built by the North door of S. Leonard, Shoreditch.

It seems that, though as yet unauthorised, the practice of employing a reading-pue was becoming every day more prevalent. For it is distinctly recognised in Harrison's description of England, prefixed to Holinshed's Chronicle, quoted in the 4th number of our Illustrations of Monumental Brasses (p. 129). "Finally whereas there was wont to be a great partition between the Choir and the body of the church, now it is either small or none at all: and to say the truth, altogether needless, sith the minister saith his service commonly in the body of the church, with his face towards the people, in a little tabernacle of wainscot provided for the purpose."

Still, the first act by which that innovation was officially sanctioned was the Canon of 1603.

"It remained for King James," says a writer in the *British Magazine*<sup>2</sup>, "who cannot be charged with want of reverence to the Altar, to break the last connecting link between it and the Daily Prayers. A convocation in the beginning of his reign directed that

<sup>1</sup> NEWCOURT, Vol. 1. *S. Leonard*.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. XVI. p. 502.



‘a convenient seat should be made for the minister,’ and the sentence naturally concluded, ‘to *read* service in.’ Thus the desk became a fixture: prayers were read *to* the people, not prayed *with* them: and the Altar, though treated with an affectation of respect at Communion-time, ceased to be the place ‘where prayer was wont to be made.’ Hence the attempt to preserve its sacredness by decoration only experienced the fate of every attempt at expressing a sentiment no longer felt.”

It must however be remembered, that these early reading-pues faced East as well as West: the enormity of a pulpit towering up between the desk and the Altar was not then thought of.

The earliest pue I have yet seen<sup>3</sup> is just of this date. It occurs in the North Aisle of Geddington S. Mary, Northamptonshire, and bears the following inscription:

*Churchwardens.* William Glover.  
Jhon Wilkie.

*Minister*..... Thomas Jones, 1602.

The formality of inserting these names at length, with the offices borne by the parties mentioned, shews what a novelty a pue was then thought in Northamptonshire.

There is another pue in the same church inscribed, T. M. M. M. [*i. e.* Thomas and Mary Maydwell, who have a brass legend near it] 1604.

The next year (1605), Archbishop Bancroft put forth his Primary Articles. Enquiry is made about a

<sup>3</sup> C. S.

convenient reading-pue: but no notice taken about other pues: whence we may conclude that Bancroft knew nothing of their existence as yet; or so thorough a churchman could not have failed to expose them.

Two years afterwards (1607), we find from one of Noy's reports, that an action was brought against certain Churchwardens for removing a pue, and cutting it in pieces. And judgment was given against them for wantonly destroying it<sup>1</sup>.

Still the evil went on increasing. In Kingstone next Lewes, Sussex, is a pue in the Chancel bearing date 1608.

At this time the fashion prevailed of providing the pues with locks. Bishop Earle says, of the 'she precise hypocrite': "She knows her own place in heaven as well as the pew she has a key to<sup>2</sup>."

In 1616<sup>3</sup>, a 'fair gallery' was built in the church of S. John, Wapping, with part of the benevolence of the mariners of the Royal James.

In 1620<sup>4</sup>, S. Mary-le-bow had square pues introduced into the Nave. This Church is a peculiar of

<sup>1</sup> I say nothing here of the loss of room occasioned by the introduction of pues, because it forms the subject of the Appendix to this paper: in which it is clearly shewn, that manage them as we will, by making them as narrow and inconvenient as possible, WE MUST LOSE TWENTY PER CENT. by their adoption in comparison with the room afforded by wood seats. I would also refer the reader to Archdeacon Hare's Primary Charge to the Archdeaconry of Lewes for some striking remarks as to the increased evil of which pues have been the cause.

<sup>2</sup> *Microcosmography*. Ed. 1786, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> NEWCOURT, Vol. I. *S. John's*.

<sup>4</sup> NEWCOURT, Vol I. *S. Mary*.

Canterbury, and Archbishop Abbott was no enemy to puritanical innovations.

<sup>5</sup> The steeple of S. James, Clerkenwell, falling down in 1623, destroyed, among other things, a gallery over against the pulpit.

About the year 1624, in the last parliament of King James, the puritans, now making a vigorous exertion on all sides, seem first to have discovered how mighty an agent for their purposes pews might become. In 1626<sup>6</sup> we find some intruded on the Chancel of Storrington S. Mary, Sussex: the Calvinian Bishop Carleton being probably too deeply engaged in defending the Synod of Dort, and attacking Dr Montague, to give his attention to this subject. Yet it is remarkable that Walter Mattock<sup>7</sup>, the then rector, was afterwards a Confessor for the Church: whence we may perhaps gather how few even of the orthodox clergy appear at this time to have foreseen the evil which they were thus sanctioning.

In the next year (1627), at Ashwell S. Mary, Herts, we find, and it is my earliest example<sup>8</sup>, a clerk's pew built. This village, it may be observed, is situated on the very borders of the Diocese; for Dr Mountain, who then filled the Chair of London, was not the Prelate to allow, had he known it, of such an innovation.

Wimborne Minster, in Dorsetshire, was in 1628 much disfigured with pews.

<sup>5</sup> NEWCOURT, *S. James*.

<sup>6</sup> C. S.

<sup>7</sup> WALKER'S *Sufferings*, p. 312.

<sup>8</sup> C. S.

In 1630<sup>1</sup>, a very costly gallery was built in S. Peter le Poor, London: and the same year another gallery, with a cross seat for catechising children, was erected in S. Leonard's, Shoreditch.

<sup>2</sup> There is a pue in Steeple Morden, Cambridge-shire, bearing date 1631. In this year Weever says, "Many monuments are covered<sup>3</sup> with seats or pews, made high and easy for parishioners to sit or sleepe in, a fashion of no long continuance, and worthy of reformation."

<sup>4</sup> Next year, 1632, a gallery was built at Gedding-ton, and another by Richard Turner and John Morritt in S. Olave, Silver Street.

<sup>5</sup> Clymping, Sussex, has a pue dated 1634.

Hitherto, all the pues I have mentioned had been single ones, scattered here and there about the church. But in 1634, Bishop's Castle S. John, Salop, was pued throughout: and in the neighbouring parish of Stoke S. Milburga two covered pues, or dovecotes, as they were called, were erected.

In 1635, the first vigorous opposition was made to pues by Matthew Wren, then Bishop of Hereford: a man whose name will be to all Churchmen a κτῆμα ἐς αἰῶν. He might perhaps have been made acquainted with the innovations in his Diocese to which I have just alluded. In his Articles, (III. 10) he asks,

"Whether doth any private man or men of his or their own authority erect any pews, or build any

<sup>1</sup> NEWCOURT, *S. Peter*.

<sup>2</sup> C. S.

<sup>3</sup> *Fun. Mon.* 701. See also *Gloss. Arch.* i. 161.

<sup>4</sup> C. S.

<sup>5</sup> C. S.

new seats in your church? And what pews or seats have been so built? at whose procurement, and by whose authority? And are all the seats and pews so ordered that they which are in them may kneel down in time of prayer, and have their faces up to the Holy Table? Are there also any kind of seats in the Chancel above the Communion Table? or on either side up even with it?"

And again, "Are there any privy closets or close pews in your church?" (like those, I suppose, which I have just mentioned at Stoke Castle.) "Are any pews so loftily made that they do any way hinder the prospect of the church or Chancel? so that they which be in them are hidden from the face of the congregation?"

And in his Articles for Norwich, put forth the next year, is the following addition:

"Is the middle alleye of the church, or any of the other alleyes or iles, or the body of the Chancel built upon (in any part thereof) in the setting up pews or seats, or for the enlarging of any there adjoining?"

About galleries he asks, (III. 13),

"What galleries are there in your church? How are they placed, or in what part of your church? When were they built, and by what authority? Is not the church large enough without them to receive all your own parishioners? Is any part of the church hidden or darkened thereby, or any in your parish annoyed or offended by them?"

Let us for a moment leave our chronological order, to see what was the fate of these Articles. Nothing



seems ever to have galled the puritans more than their appearance at a time when the downfall of the Church was confidently expected by them. That so clear and bold a vindication of original practices should then be put forth, appears equally to have astonished and perplexed the innovators, already anticipating an easy victory:

οὐ γὰρ ὡς φυγῇ  
 παιᾶν' ἐφύμνουσιν σεμνὸν Ἑλλήνες τότε,  
 ἀλλ' ἐς μάχην ὀρμῶντες εὐψύχῳ θράσει.

And the revenge taken on them was equally marked. On July 20, 1640, a charge of high crimes and misdemeanours was exhibited by the Commons before the House of Lords against Wren: Sir Thomas Widdrington conducting the prosecution. Among other charges, one was that he had oppressed many poor parishes by making them, at a vast expense, remove the pews from their churches. The doctrine of Bishop Wren was by the House of Commons declared Arminian, and heretical, and himself stripped of all his preferments, and made incapable of holding any other for ever.

The exertions of Wren, seconded by the authority of Laud, seem for a time to have prevailed; many open wood-seats of this date now existing. I may mention one in Foulmire, in this county, bearing date 1635<sup>1</sup>, and one at S. Cuthbert's<sup>2</sup>, York, 1637.

In 1636, I find the word *Desk* used for the first time, as we now so commonly use it, in the sense of

<sup>1</sup> C.S.

<sup>2</sup> C.S.



reading-pue. This is in a sermon called *Profano Mastix*, by John Swan, Rector of Duxford S. Peter's, in this county, preached at Sawston, in a visitation of the Archdeacon of Ely.

Wren being translated to Ely, Montague succeeded him in Norwich. In his primary articles<sup>3</sup> (1638) he demands:

“Are the seats and pews built of an uniformity? or do they hinder and encumber their neighbours in hearing GOD's Word, and performing Divine Service?”

With respect to galleries, he asks, (I. 10),

“Is your church scaffolded any where, or in part? Do these scaffolds so made annoy any man's seat, or hinder the light of any windows in the church?”

But pues and galleries were now prevailing every where. In a pamphlet entitled, *A true relation of those sad and lamentable accidents which happened in and about the parish church of Withycombe, in the Dartmoors, Oct. 21, 1638*, we read (p. 7),

“One Mistress Ditford sitting in the same pew with the minister's wife, was hurt, but the maid sitting near the door of the pew had no harm.” However the church was not pewed throughout; for we read, p. 9, “Some seats in the body of the church were turned upside down.”

And in the before-quoted *Voice of the Lord*, we find (p. 4), that William Sargent, one of the sufferers, was kneeling at the east end of the Chancel, in a pue, with his back to the east, and his face to the Holy Table.

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted with a Memoir and Notes, Camb. 1841.

In a *Copy of the Proceedings of some Divines appointed by the Lords to meet at the Bishop of Lincoln's, in Westminster*, among the innovations which they mention in discipline, one is, the demolishing galleries where they have been built, and forbidding the erection of new ones. These divines were Bishop, afterwards Archbishop, Williams, Archbishop Ussher, Dr Prideaux, afterwards Bishop of Worcester, Dr Ward, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury, Dr Brownrigg, afterwards Bishop of Exeter, Dr Hacket, afterwards Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, and Dr Featly.

At this time, however, Bishop Williams bestirred himself against the innovation of pews. For we are told in *A Sermon very necessary for the times, of conscience, by Anthony Cade, B.D. Cambridge, 1639*, that he removed the pews from the chapel at Buckden; substituting in their place wooden seats; the remaining description of what that great—would we could say good—Prelate did, is very interesting:

“The cloisters fairly pargetted and beautified with comely copartments and inscriptions of wise counsels and sentences; the windows enriched with costly pictures of Prophets, Apostles, and Holy Fathers; and beyond all the chapel for GOD's immediate service most beautifully furnished with new seats, windows, Altar, Bibles, and other sacred books, costly covered, and embossed with silver, and gilt with gold; candlesticks and other ornaments of bright shining silver, and with stately organs curiously coloured, gilded, and enamelled.”

It appears, if we may believe the Royalist writers,

that pews were used at this time by the Puritans for purposes very different from those of devotion. In a play, perhaps written by Brome, the cavalier, and called, if I mistake not, *Love's High Court of Commission*, the lover wishing to obtain a kiss from his mistress, she says, "Fie, sir! I would have you to know that we are not now in our pew."

In 1641, Dr Poocklington, already hated by the Puritans for his *Sunday no Sabbath*, published his *Altare Christianum*. In the second edition of this work, he inserted the following passage, which is not to be found in the first:

"The practice of piety was then (in the Primitive Church) performed in kneeling before their Saviour and Redeemer. The stools they had were either none, or none but fallstools, to come and fall down and kneel before the LORD. [This etymology is, I need not say, more pious than correct.] Ambition to step up into the highest rooms and seats, and there to enclose and enthrone themselves, was confined to pharisaical feasts and synagogues; holy men and good Christians had no such custom in those times—sought no such state and ease—nor did the Church of God. The Churches of God did and do detest the profaneness that is and may be committed in close and exalted pews."

This book was licensed by Dr Bray, domestic chaplain to Archbishop Laud, a man mentioned favourably in a letter written to that holy Martyr by Dr Montague, when Bishop of Chichester. But afterwards changing his principles, he wrote *A Sermon of the*

*Blessed Sacrament*, 1641, professedly in answer to Pocklington's *Altare Christianum*. At p. 52, is the following sentence: "He (Pocklington) saith that close and exalted pews are profane, and were detested by the Church of God. Which is but his foolish and fond conceit."

The end of Pocklington's history is soon told. Feb. 12, 1641, it was ordered by the House of Lords that he should be deprived, his two books publicly burnt by the common hangman, and himself made incapable of preferment, and forbidden to go to court. Soon after, says Walker<sup>1</sup>, he died of grief.

We have seen then that pews were supported by puritans and attacked by churchmen. We must now enquire into the reasons of this fact; for it is a mistake to suppose that it was only the love of comfort and ease, and a pharisaical desire of separating themselves from their neighbours, which led the former to uphold,—and only a zeal for the beauty of GOD's houses which induced the latter to denounce them; besides these more obvious causes, there were others as substantial at work on both sides.

It must be remembered, that in an age when the Bishops' Injunctions to Churchwardens were so stringent, and when a presentment for contumacy involved consequences so serious, that those who were determined on disobeying episcopal authority were at least willing as much as possible to conceal their disobedience. And pews afforded them an excellent method of doing so.

<sup>1</sup> *Sufferings*, p. 136.

I shall mention four of the principal uses of the Church at which puritans took offence: in all of which high pews would form a very convenient shelter.

I. Nothing gave more offence to the puritans than the injunction of Queen Elizabeth,—an injunction repeated in our Canons—that “whenever in any lesson, sermon, or otherwise, the name of JESUS shall be in the church pronounced, due reverence be made of all persons, young and old, with lowness of courtesy and uncovering of the heads of the men-kind, as thereunto doth necessarily belong, and heretofore hath been accustomed.”

The first injunction to this effect occurring after the Reformation, is that of the Synod of S. Asaph, 1561. It runs thus:

“In time of service, read or sung in the church, so often as the name of JESUS, being our Saviour, shall be rehearsed, due reverence shall be made of all persons, young and old.”

During the whole of Queen Elizabeth's reign the point was in dispute: and in spite of the solid answers given by Hooker and Whitgift to the calumniators of this pious custom, they appear rapidly to have gained strength. In 1610, an elaborate attack was made on it by Henry Jacob, a puritanick minister, under the title of *A plain and clear Exposition of the Second Commandment*.

A parochial minister at Oxford, by name Giles Widdowes, having written a defence of the custom, Prynne, in 1630, sent out a pamphlet under the name of *Lame Giles his haltings; or a brief survey of*



*Giles Widow's Confutation of no bowing at the Name of JESUS.* From this tract we incidentally gain the information, that daily service was used in at least many of the parish-churches at Oxford.

Burton followed on the same side; impiously calling his book, *Jesu worship*.

From a visitation sermon preached at Brentwood, in Essex, by John Elberow, M. A. before Archbishop Laud, Feb. 28, 1636, and afterwards published with the title of *Euodias and Syntyche*, it would appear that the female part of puritanical congregations were especially obstinate in this matter.

In a dialogue called *Certaine Grievances*, by a vehement fanatic, Lewis Hews, we find the following:

*Gentleman.* "Why do the Bishops make an idol of the name of JESUS, by causing men to bow their bodies, and to put off their hats whenever it is named?"

*Minister.* Because they mistake the Word of GOD, where it is written, 'At the name of JESUS every knee shall bow, &c.'

The Bishops now interfered with their Articles. In 1641, Edmund Reeves, in his *Explanation of the most sacred Catechism of the Church*, says, [p. 131], speaking of schismatics:

"When as the greater part of the congregation do duly reverence the Lord JESUS, they will express their contempt of the most sacred Church-law in the very face of the congregation, unto the high dishonour of the LORD, and the scandal of all such as are assembled in God's Holy Place. The Holy Fatherhood in their Articles which they set forth for church



officers' use, do divinely admonish hereof: but where are they which have care and zeal to take notice who do their duty, and who not?" And again he says, "But now many men and women have that most holy custom in open defiance, so as it is not meet for mention."

In this same year (1641), Aug. 6, Articles were exhibited against Dr Beale, Master of S. John's College, in this University, before the House of Commons. The fourth of these was, that at S. Mary's he said it was a sin of damnation not to bow at the name of JESUS.

However, Parliament thought otherwise; and little more than a month after taking cognizance of this charge, (Sept. 9, 1641), issued an order that all corporal bowing at the Name of JESUS be henceforth forborne.

The matter did not, however, stop here. For in the next year we find Sir E. Dering, himself a determined puritan, courageously protesting to the House<sup>1</sup>, "For my part, I do humbly ask pardon of the House, and thereupon take leave to give you my resolute resolution: I will do bodily reverence to my SAVIOUR, and that upon occasions taken at the mention of His Saving Name JESUS."

To mention all the ministers against whom this was made matter of accusation, before the Earl of Manchester and the Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel, would be to recapitulate the greater part of Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*. The re-

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches*, p. 35.

mains of the Anglican Church during this gloomy period resolutely persisted in the practice; and as late as 1653<sup>1</sup>, we find John Allington, afterwards Rector of Leamington Garstang, ejected for saying he would be torn in pieces sooner than give up bowing at the Name of JESUS.

In 1659 was published, apparently for the first time, a treatise by Fox, the heresiarch of Quakerdom, *On Bowing*. In this, curiously enough, he seems (for it is not easy to understand his language) to leave the matter indifferent.

In 1661, the practice, as might naturally be expected, again prevailed: for the ever mischievous Prynne thought it worth his while, in his *Pacific Examination of the Common Prayer-book*, to declaim violently against it.

Bishop Laney, of Peterborough, in 1662; Archbishop Juxon in 1663; Bishop Rainbow, of Carlisle, in 1665; Bishop Turner, of Ely, in 1686; and even after the Revolution, Bishop Patrick, of Ely, 1692, all enjoin the practice; since which time I have not found any express order on the subject, though of course the Canon which orders it is still as binding as ever.

I have dwelt at some length on this point, because I wished you to be aware of the influence it had on the erection of pews. And we shall not now be surprised to find, in a copy of Bishop Montague's Articles, preserved in Trinity College Library, at the side of the question, "Do they ... bend or bow at the

<sup>1</sup> *The Good Samaritan*, 1673, p. 25.

glorious, sacred and sweet name of JESUS?" the following note in an old hand, "*Wee colde not presente, by reason of y<sup>e</sup> high and close pews.*"

II. Another thing much objected by the Puritans was the injunction to stand at the *Gloria Patri*.

The Society may not be aware, that till the Restoration the use of our Church was this: during the reading of the Psalms, the minister stood while the people sat, the latter however rising at the Doxology.

Bastwick, while imprisoned after his censure in Jersey, wrote a most scurrilous pamphlet on this subject, called *Bastwick's Litany*, wherein he says, (p. 11), "The Churchwardens must therefore first inform about their beggarly rudiments, and for that they have a strict charge given them to take notice about capping, ducking, standing up and kneeling—a plaguy deal of porridge!"

And Montague, in the next year, asks, (v. 14), "Do they stand in the Doxology against the oppugners of the Trinity, which was repeated in the Primitive Church after every Psalm, and ought to be so in ours?"

At the Restoration, the Convocation at York recommended to that of Canterbury the reintroduction of this practice, and its extension to all the Psalms; and this is the authority for our present practice, as well as for our not rising at the Gloria in the Litany, which was then specially excepted.

The practice of rising at the Doxology only was, as we are all aware, maintained among ourselves at S. Mary's, till within the present year. Its origin appears to have been quite unknown to those who then inter-

ested themselves in the question : or we should not have heard the confident assertions that the use was not half a century old : that it was originally introduced for the convenience of marking, or that it was the result of a compact between the Vice-Chancellor and the Undergraduates,—a compact about as real as that which plays so conspicuous a part in some theories of the origin of government.

Now pues, as we are told by Dr Udall, whose name I shall presently bring before you, were much esteemed as sheltering from observation those who would not, in this point, obey the law of the Church.

III. A third reason for the erection of pues may be found in the injunction of the Canons of 1640, about bowing towards the Altar.

A most elaborate defence of this custom was made by Dr Lawrence, chaplain to the king, in a sermon preached at court by him, on Feb. 7, 1640 ; and afterwards published by his Majesty's special command.

Edmund Reeves, two years later, says in the book before quoted : “The Divine Wisdom of the Church calling the Sacred Table GOD's Board, doth give us to understand that that is to be accounted the peculiar seat of GOD within the Temple ; and therefore towards it unto GOD there we are to make low obeisance, whenever we come into GOD's House to pray. Also as the Chair of State is always to be honoured, though the Person of the Royal Majesty be not seen therein, so is GOD's Board always to have due reverence, and GOD, Who is there perpetually, is always to be prostrated unto.”

The next year a bitter pamphlet was written against this practice as introduced into the church at Chester, by John Ley, Rector of Great Budworth, and a prebendary of that cathedral. He says (p. 26), "I never yet bowed head either to, or towards, the Altar, or the Holy Table." This unfortunate man was one of the very few cathedral clergy who in time of persecution fell away; he became afterwards a member of the Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel.

It is remarkable that the orthodox clergy were accused by the Romanists of idolatry, in conforming to this custom. We, said they, in bowing to the Altar, adore the Corporal Presence of our Saviour. You, who believe in no such doctrine, are worshipping the work of your own hands. Hence arose that distinction on the part of the Anglican's of bowing *to* and *toward* the Altar, which we may have noticed in some of the passages quoted above.

About this time, we read, with reference to the same subject, much of *Durhamists* and *Anti-Durhamists*. The terms will be best explained by some extracts I shall read to you from a pamphlet, called *Canterbury's Crueltie*, written by the "infamous Peter Smart," Prebendary of Durham. Nor do I think that I am at all wandering from my proper subject in bringing these passages before you, bearing so closely as they do on the ancient arrangement of our churches. And I may add, that great light is thrown on the whole matter by a ground plan of Brancepeth church, Durham, as arranged by Bishop Cosin, which is in the Society's Portfolio.



“This Cousin,” says Smart, “hath defiled the church of Durham, and the service therein with images and altars, and many superstitious and idolatrous ceremonies; as he hath done all other places where he had to do; and for this cause being so wicked a beast (a little specimen of Puritan courtesy), and so cruel in persecuting me, he hath been greatly in Bishop Neale and Bishop Laud’s favour.”

Again: in his petition, presented Nov. 3, 1640, to the House of Commons, he says: “After the death of Bishop James, Bishop Neale coming to the See of Durham, the then Dean and Prebendaries of that Cathedral Church cast out the Communion Table of the said Church, and erected an High Altar at the east end of the Chancel of marble stones, with a carved screen most gloriously painted and gilded, which cost about £200. And they bought for 40s. one Cope found in a search after Mass Priests embroidered with the Holy Trinity, and other images; and another Cope worth about ten groats, which had been a long time used by the youth of Durham in their sports and May-games,—a very fool’s coat—both which Copes they used at the administration of the Holy Communion at their Altar. *To which Altar themselves both did, and forced others to use unreasonable frequent bowing.* D. Cousin officiated thereat with his face to the East, and back to the people. They did take away the Morning Prayer, to which about 200 persons did alway resort, at six, and altered the same into singing with instruments. They did likewise set up fifty-three glorious images and pictures.”

In the speech of Fr. Rous, Esq. at the impeachment of Archbishop Laud, March 16, 1640, we read (p. 7): "The Altar, Copes, etc. cost more than £2000. They caused two choristers in their surplices to come from the West end of the Chancel with lighted torches in their hands, to the Altar, who did light the candles upon the same with their torches; which done, they returned backward with many bowings."

And further on: "The Font they removed from the ancient usual place in the Chancel (a true specimen of puritanic antiquity), and placed it out of the Chancel, where Divine Service is never read."

In *A Short Treatise of Altars*, written by this author in 1629, he speaks of "corruptions which having begun at Durham, have since spread themselves over all the Cathedral and Collegiate churches and colleges of this realm: yea, and many parish-churches have set up Altars, images, and organs, where they never were since the days of King Philip and Queen Mary."

A little further on, we have the word pews used for stalls or seats. Bishop Cosin, says Smart, would "say to others, even gentlewomen of the best rank, sitting in their pews, Can ye not stand, you lazy sows? when the Nicene Creed was sung."

In reading these extracts, it is right to remember that many of the charges were solemnly denied by Dean Cosin; and so notorious was Smart's character, that his counsel, S. John, a vehement puritan, told him plainly before the House of Lords, "I am ashamed of you and of your cause."

It appears, however, that about this time the present practice of kneeling down on taking a seat, was beginning to supersede that of bowing to the Altar.

In a volume of *Sermons preached on Sundays and Saints Days*, by *P. Hausted, Curate at Uppingham*, 1636, the author says, p. 222: "But I hear another object, will not presently kneeling down in my seat when I come into the church, and saying a private prayer, lifting up a private ejaculation unto the LORD, serve the turn, without first bowing down and prostrating myself unto the Altar?"

In the *Directory*, 1644, it is ordered, "Let all enter the assembly, not irreverently, but in a grave and seemly manner, taking their seats and places without any bowing, to one place or another."

This practice was not generally revived at the Restoration. The Convocation order, 1662: "They shall make their humble address to Almighty GOD for His Divine blessing and assistance upon the services to be performed; and His gracious acceptance of the same."

As late, however, as 1682, I find the following passage in a tract called, *Of the worship of God toward the Holy Table or Altar*, (p. 108):

"Why must we make courtesy when we come into the church? can we not stay till we come to our pews, and then fall down to our prayers?"

The practice of bowing is, I am informed, kept up in the Cathedral Church at Oxford; and at Hereford and Canterbury, the Canons, if I am not mistaken, are bound to it by oath.

Bishop Montague had asked in 1638 (VIII. 11), "Do all your parishioners, when they are to receive the Holy Communion.....come to the LORD'S Table? And not (after the most contemptuous and unholy usage of some, if men did but rightly consider) sit still in their seats and pews, to have the Blessed Body and Blood of his SAVIOUR go up and down to seek them all the church over?" And I had intended to give the Society some illustrations of the method in which this "unholy usage" bore on the famous order of Archbishop Laud, that all Communion Tables should be removed to the east end. Time however forbids; and I must hasten to introduce to your notice a curious tract written in 1641, on the express subject of pews; from which, as it is nearly unknown, I shall make no apology for reading you copious extracts. It is called ΤΟ ΠΡΕΠΟΝ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΧΟΝ: *Communion Comeliness: wherein is discovered the conveniency of the people's drawing nigh to the Table in the sight, thereof, when they receive the LORD'S Supper. With the great unfitness of receiving it in Pews in London, for the novelty of High and Close Pews. By Ephraim Udall, D.D., Rector of S. Austin's, London.*

In a copy of this Author's *Noli me tangere*, in Trinity Library, is the following MS. note, written in a very old hand:

"This Pamphlet was written by Mr E. Udall, Rector of S. Austin's. He was much followed and admired by the puritans before the rebellion, and esteemed a precious man among them. But when he perceived whither they were driving, he began to de-



clare pretty freely against rebellion and sacrilege. He therefore published this and some other pamphlets to stop their career. But as they contained a great many insufferable truths, fit indeed to convict, but not to reclaim them, this stung them so severely that they resolved to be avenged on him, notwithstanding all his former moderation. They therefore not only deprived, but plundered him; turning his aged and lame wife out of doors, with particular circumstances of inhumanity and barbarity." Walker gives a nearly similar account, and White makes him No. 23 of his Century.

In the very outset of the Tract we are informed of another reason why the puritans held pews in esteem. Those who received the Holy Communion in their pews escaped the notice of every one but the clergyman, with respect to standing or kneeling; nothing, as we well know, being more odious to them than the enforcement of the latter position; and if the clergyman presented them, nothing was easier than to accuse him to the Commons of malignancy.

The following extracts throw, I think, much light on the internal arrangements of churches; and the church of S. Tydecho, Mallwydd, in Merionethshire and Montgomeryshire, is an instance of a similar arrangement now: the then Rector having refused obedience to Archbishop Laud's mandates, and the disposition of the seats having remained unaltered from his day. The Holy Table here stands in the middle of the Chancel, and is surrounded on all sides by pews.

In p. 2, Dr Udall laments how far we are dege-



nerated from receiving, in London especially, by a late new kind of building the pews so much higher and closer than heretofore; and asserts that thirty years before (i.e. 1611) this innovation was only beginning to be thought of; and that even then it had very little infected country parishes, and was quite unknown in Wales.

Speaking of the arrangements adopted in his own church, he says,

“I set up a square rail in the Chancel in time of Communion only; and that within the pews that were made to fold down for that use, excepting the east end, where the pew was removed before I came: by this means I received a double row of communicants one within the other near the Table in a very small Chancel, to the number of forty or fifty at one time, in the pew and at the rails.”

His plan is as follows:

“In the administration of the Communion it may be wished that the best provision that can be devised be made to have the greatest number of Communicants together at one time at the table, in sight thereof and within hearing of the minister, that can be received thither. And when they have received that they may depart, and another company come in their room, and so after them a third and a fourth, till all have received, which may be done in a very small Chancel by providing that they may sit a double row of communicants, the pews being made square about the Chancel, and one of them before the other; as it is and hath been used in the church of Black Friars, London,

only with this difference: That whereas that church hath the inner pews immoveable, because it useth not that ground for buriall, which is the case in other churches, the inner pews may be made so as they may be removed when the ground is to be used for buriall, as now is practised in many churches, where all the pews of the church are so ordered, that any of them, and all of them successively, are taken up, and the ground used. And this order of a double row of pews may be in any Chancel of indifferent greatness, that will bear two rows of pews. And where the Chancel is so small, and the room so strait, that only one row of pews may stand continually, there may be provided a moveable Rail or Wainscot, to be used only at the Communion time, and placed within the pews, that the Minister may give the Communion to them that are at the rail or wainscot, and to those also that be in the pews behind them, as it hath been used in some places by the care and device of some ministers, that desiring the benefit and edification of their people by seeing and hearing and communicating together as members of one body, have in this manner brought them together about the Table, where forty or fifty are at one time together, about and near the same, the pews going round about the Chancel, and a rail within the pews for the Communicants to kneel at, which after the Communion is removed till the next Communion. And so from time to time."

Again, he says, "The Communion is rent and divided in to so many single societies of twos and threes as there be pewfulls in the whole church. And there-

fore is it like private Masses, though they do receive, if they receive it scattered here and there, and are shut up close, that they can neither see nor hear until the minister come to the pews where they sit; in which sometimes there are divers pews, and they far distant one from the other, in which there are but one or two Communicants in the corner, and one or two in the other corner, and others up in the gallery, and so to have the Minister to hunt up and down to search them out. And I think shortly, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper will get up into the steeple among the Bells with us, as the Sacrament of Baptism hath heretofore done among the Papists.

“One single Communicant alone in a pew by himself, and rent from all the rest of the Communicants, and receiving, as it were, in a room alone, is as it is in housling of the sick among the Papists.”

P. 6. “They are built higher and larger than heretofore they have been, fitter it may be for greater attention that the ancient pews, which were not above the middle of the body, and exposed men's eyes to more roving and wandering than those high pews, which are more private.”

P. 7. “Draw near and receive. Intending, whether the Communion were administered in the Chancel or body of the church, the Table should stand in the midst, and the Communicants come near about it, which notwithstanding, was most commonly done in the Chancel for communicating in pews, so generally as of late, is but a late usage, and at first was practised but by some few particular ministers, as they supposed it most con-

venient that all might be nearest together to see and hear: which in some places where the pews were low, and the Chancel little or inconveniently distant from the body of the church, was done in the body of the church."

P. 8. "If therefore the Communion be administered in pews they must be cut down. And certainly, if the late reviving of the ancient manner of bringing up the people by turns into the Chancel to the Table, had been so wise as to have made use of the whole Chancel as well as the Rail, and so happy as to have escaped the folly of erecting an Altar, and there worshipping the work of their own hands, it had been incomparably more convenient.

"It is a needless weariness put upon the minister to go up and down the church reaching and stretching out, rending and tearing themselves in long pews, to hold forth the elements over four or five persons: it is also an occasion of shedding or spilling the bread and wine."

P. 11. "It might be wished that in London there might be some provision made of a rail or wainscot, standing some convenient distance from the Table on Communion-days: for we cannot spare all the Chancel for that purpose by shutting up the doors."

P. 12. "And in some places boys do write on the Table, it being prepared for the Chancel." He also mentions another objection to pews, namely,

"Danger of infection from plague, or person with a plague sore,—no uncommon thing in London congregations."

P. 15. "If the rail offend there may be a wainscot made instead thereof, as it is in Blackfryars; the seats of which are so ordered about the Table, that two or three rows of Communicants may come at one time round about it, and in view of it: which Church hath never been accused of Popery.

"At the rail it shall be seen whether they kneel, or no; all in close pews may be concealed."

P. 17. Amongst innovations he reckons "a wainscot screen to keep off the wind, high pews, beneficial that way, also locks to our pew-doors, that we may enjoy them ourselves, larger lights and windows, galleries for your youth to sit in, that were wont to stand at their Master and Dame's pew-doors; for many years after churches were built there were no pews at all;" but such people first bringing stools, "it grew from them to benches, and after into pews, and at last to what it is now come unto."

From these extracts we may gather the opinion of a very "low Churchman" of his day on the great harm of pews. And his testimony to the then novelty of their adoption is irresistible.

P. 20. "Rails round the Table, not moveable—in middle of Chancel are not Popish nor an innovation, for the use of rails have been the custom in many churches, town and country, beyond the memory of many people, 60 or 80 years old. In the books of some churches in London, they are said to be set up in beginning of Q. Elizabeth's reign, before which they were not used."

It is a remarkable fact, that between the years 1646 and 1660, scarcely any pews would appear to have been erected. I have never seen a single instance of one



bearing date within this period; and this may serve to prove the truth of what I have been saying with respect to the reasons which led the puritans to adopt them. For now that the cause was gone; now that people might sit, stand, or lie down, as they pleased, at the Communion—might abstain from bowing towards the Altar, or at the Holy Name—the effect ceased too.

A gallery was erected, however, in 1657<sup>1</sup>, in Gloucester S. Nicholas; and we are told that at S. Peter's<sup>2</sup>, Paul's Wharf, where the Church Service was used for some time previously to the Restoration, many of the nobility flocked to hear it, and were accommodated in galleries hung with rich Turkey-work carpets.

But, though our churches were even at the Restoration comparatively free from pews, England's character had been puritanized, and the questions of her prelates evince a different feeling with respect to them; a disposition to look at them in the light of a necessary evil. Bishop Laney asks (1662), "Is there any strife or contention for the pews or seats in your church? Have any new pews been erected in your Chancel, or the body of your church, without leave of the ordinary?" And Bishop Rainbow (1665) asks nearly the same question.

Still, pews were sufficiently common, and churches began here and there—chiefly in large towns—to be pewed throughout. In *The Oracles of the Dissenters*, (1707), we are told that the spire of S. Mary Tower, at Ipswich, was blown down, Feb. 18, 1661; and on account of its fall the church had to be repewed.

<sup>1</sup> C.S.

<sup>2</sup> NEWCOURT, S. Peter.

Sir Christopher Wren, it is well known, made a gallant, though unsuccessful stand, against the introduction of pews into his London churches.

There is a pew in the chancel of Leigh<sup>1</sup>, Surrey, bearing date 1677; one in Steeple Morden<sup>2</sup>, Cambridge-shire, 1687; one in Llanfwrog, Denbighshire, 1690<sup>3</sup>.

The first instance I have met with of the unhappy practice of making the income of a clergyman dependent on his pew-rents, occurs at the erection of S. Anne's, Westminster, into a separate parish, in 1686<sup>4</sup>.

At the revolution, churches began to assume their present appearance, and were repewed by wholesale. Then, too, pews first began to be held in admiration.

In a sermon preached at the opening of S. Anne's, Annapolis, Maryland, Sept. 24, 1704, by the Rev. Jas. Wootton, mention is made almost in one breath of the pews, and of "this beautiful temple, so enormously magnificent."

America has always dearly loved pews. "We must not forget," says a writer in the *North American Review*, "one remarkable contrivance in our early churches, the arrangement of the pew-seats. These were made with hinges, so that in prayer time they might be raised up and allow the occupants to lean against the back of the pew. At the close of the prayer they were slammed down with a noise like the broadside of a frigate."

In Boston, we are told, some of the pews are actually lined with *velvet*: and the Rev. H. Caswall, in his late *History of the American Church*, laments

<sup>1</sup> C. S.<sup>2</sup> C. S. .<sup>3</sup> C. S.<sup>4</sup> NEWCOURT, *S. Anne*.

the unchurchlike appearance of some churches which have open seats instead of pews!

The few pews which occur here and there in churches on the continent, appear to be of very late date, and materials even worse than our own.

The Spectator, Guardian, and Tatler, speak of pews as we should do now; and the occasional glimpses which Sir Charles Grandison gives us of the inside of a church introduce us to the closely pewed building of modern days; as also do Hogarth's pictures.

Bishop Gibson, of London, was a great promoter of pews; and the earliest instances I have seen of *numbered pews* were put up in his diocese while he filled that chair. His intentions were, however, for the best; for he says in his directions (1727), "GOD be thanked, there has of late years been in this nation an unusual zeal for the repairing and beautifying parochial churches, and furnishing them with all proper accommodations for the decent and orderly performance of Divine Service." The church of S. Nicholas, Shepperton, a cross church, (now much mutilated, but capable of great improvement,) as arranged by him, has every seat turned towards the pulpit, which is at the south side of the Chancel-arch: an immense space is lost by square pews: there are two such in the Chancel, one of which is the Rector's.

I will not follow the Puritans, of whom I have had so much to say, in *drawing an use from*, or, as it would be called now, in *improving* the subject. It would be mere loss of time. I have shewn you, that pews, originally the offspring of indolence and pride, were

soon found most valuable assistants in defying Church-laws, and braving Church-censures. I have told you who were their advocates—men like Prynne, Burton, Bastwick, Hughes; I have told you that they were denounced by Laud, and Wren, and Montague, and other holy Bishops, who, partly by their opposition to this very innovation, have won for themselves the Martyr's and the Confessor's Crown. I have not told you—and why need I?—you have lamented it for yourselves—the destruction and devastation which have followed pves into our churches. Roodcreens, once enshrining the Chancel in their transparent net work, now cut down and baized into a pue-back; brasses, once fondly viewed with the hope that they might preserve the name of a beloved friend for ever, now boarded over or broken in pieces; piers, recklessly cut half-way through for the reception of a luxurious pue-corner; windows, Fonts, sedilia, all bear witness against the innovation, for all have suffered by it. Nay, your Church, with every rubrick denouncing, and that in the strongest way, by implication, these abortions of a puritanick age, these distractors of devotion, which, (in so far as they tend to deaden the feeling that in the House of Prayer, we are all one body) offend against our glorious belief in the Communion of Saints,—she herself seems to urge you to lend your aid in the struggle now carrying on against them.

ἡ γὰρ νέους ἔρποντας εὐμενεῖ πέδῳ  
 ἅπαντα πανδοκῶσα παιδείας ὄτλον  
 ἐθρέψατ' οἰκιστῆρας ἀσπιδηφόρους  
 πιστοὺς ὅπως γένοισθε πρὸς χρέος τόδε.

And we, who are called by our Ecclesiological pursuits to see more than others of these lidless boxés, painted every colour and all colours, these cattleless pens, therein inferior to those at Smithfield, that they are never cleaned, but harbour in their tattered green baize the dust and corruption of a century;—shall we not more than others exert ourselves to cast out the evil?

And now I have done. I must leave it to the future historian of pues to tell how the first outcry was raised against them by Dr Warton<sup>1</sup>; how the first stroke was struck by Dr Burton; how pues fell before the Archdeacons of East and West Sussex like heroes in Homer before Achilles; how, since puing does not suit churches, the experiment was tried in 1840 whether it might not be better adapted for a cathedral, and Bath Abbey being pued and galleried became surprisingly like a conventicle; how objections were raised against wood-seats on the score of family disunion; how, nevertheless, the CAMBRIDGE CAMDEN SOCIETY, in itself a host, came into the field, how its members wrote and acted, and, if need be, suffered, in the cause, how in their church of S. ALBAN THE PROTOMARTYR the Choir had rich oaken misereres, the Nave and Aisles poppy-heads and priedieux, and how, going forth to their several stations in life, they fought, as in other instances, so in this, the battle of Catholick principle against puritanical selfishness, and were in no small degree the cause of its final victory.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. of Kiddington*, p. 5.



Note A. p. 9. Since writing the above I have met with a passage where pue bears most distinctly the sense of open seat. It occurs in Dr Cosin's Memorial to Archbishop Laud, in Cambridge, as quoted in Dr Peacock's Observations on our Statutes, p. 96. Here the benches on which the choristers sat in the Chapel of Trinity College, are called by this name.

Note B. p. 11. The nearest approach to an ancient pue with which I am acquainted occurs in Lavenham Church, Suffolk, where are two rich covered stalls of late Perpendicular work, which certainly bear some approximation to pues, though in fact they are not really so, any more than the Decanal seat in the Choir of a Cathedral.

N. B. By C. S. in the foregoing pages the Society's Church Schemes are referred to, from which (pues being one of our items) much information was to be gained.



# THE STATISTICS OF PUES

## A REPORT

PRESENTED BY

## THE SUB-COMMITTEE

APPOINTED TO CONSIDER THE COMPARATIVE ACCOMMO-  
DATION AND EXPENCE OF PUES AND OPEN SEATS

ON MONDAY DECEMBER 6 1841



## A REPORT,

&c.

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A SUB-COMMITTEE of the CAMBRIDGE CAMDEN SOCIETY has recently been engaged in an inquiry into the comparative advantages of pews and open benches in churches, as to the numbers they are capable of accommodating: the results they have arrived at plead so strongly in favour of the open benches, on the simple ground of their superior capacity, that it is thought advisable to lay them before the public. They appear to form a suitable Appendix to a historical notice of pews which has for its object to condemn those inclosures on historical grounds:—and by thus proving that both history and statistics are against them, it is hoped that something may be done towards that goodly work which has been so well begun in other quarters<sup>1</sup>—the abolition of pews.

As pews are much the same everywhere, it is of little importance to mention *where* the investigations were made which are the ground of our statements, except as a guarantee that those statements are the result of actual observation. Churches in and about Cambridge were most accessible, and surveys were made of the churches of S. Michael, S. Edward, S. Mary the Less, and The Holy Trinity, in Cambridge: and of

<sup>1</sup> See Archdeacon HARE's *Charge*, pp. 11—14.



those of Chesterton, Barton, Comberton, Madingley, and Barnwell S. Andrew and Christ Church.

The grounds for calculation assumed in this inquiry were these :

(1) That church accommodation, to be worthy the name, must provide for the three postures which are contemplated by the Ritual, or at least required by the practice, of the Church of England—which are,

Kneeling—for Confession of sins and Prayer :

Standing—for Praise and Profession of Faith :

Sitting—to hear the Word of God and Sermons.

(2) That all persons in the body of the church should have their faces at all times turned toward the east.

(3) That, as to space, it is generally considered that about 18 inches is an adequate width of seat (from his right to his left) for each person:—the dimensions required from back to front in the pue or bench will be examined into presently.

Pues may, for convenience sake, be considered as of two kinds: (1) the square pue: (2) the long pue.

I. Pues called for brevity's sake *square*, are of all dimensions, and mostly oblong; they have been termed, and not inaptly, *company* pues, from the occupants *sitting round* in them, as at a table—sometimes in reality round a table, as may be seen in some country-churches. This is confessedly the most objectionable species of pue: indeed, the objections to it are so obvious as to need little remark. The impropriety which they involve, of some of their occupants sitting with their backs to the Altar, sufficiently condemns them, on

grounds distinct from those on which we are now trying them. But on these grounds, too, they stand condemned no less; for the waste of room by them is enormous. This is apparent on the face of the thing, but to give some idea of the extent of room lost we subjoin a few statistics. It was found convenient to take an area of 42 feet (from E. to W.) by 7 feet 6 (from N. to S.), for the purpose of comparing the capacity of these pues with that of open benches. The average case of this species of pue, and perhaps the most favourable, is where the pues are somewhat small, and rather oblong than square. Our area of 42 feet by 7 feet 6 will contain six such pues, each 7 feet 6 (N. to S.) by 7 feet (E. to W.) The utmost such a pue will hold is nine, *to sit*; for kneeling it must be reduced to seven. The six pues therefore will hold forty-two: whereas in the same area seventeen benches at least (as will be shewn hereafter) may be placed, each holding five persons, or eighty-five in all, double the number. But further, if these pues be held (as generally they are) by separate families, the average number of occupants will probably be about five. However, these pues are too monstrous to be defended, and are perhaps little likely to be put up in churches at the present day: yet to get rid of the existing specimens is a task of some difficulty.

II. It is the pues we have called long pues that appear to be the more proper subject of our comparison. For these much more may be said, and they will be proportionably more difficult to extirpate. They do not oblige persons to turn their backs to the east,

or to sit round as at a fire-side, or kneel face to face, converging to a centre—or (not always at least) to half kneel and half sit, propped on a seat-edge behind and a hassock before; moreover, they have the appearance of making the utmost of every inch of room. We say the *appearance*: for in this respect we hope to make it clear to a demonstration, that benches are superior to pues—viz. as to the numbers they will contain, in a given space, of attendants on the ritual of the Church of England.

Let us first refer to some measurements made in Christ Church, Barnwell. Here we find in a length of 40 feet fourteen pues: in the same length (in the middle alley of the church) eighteen benches. The numbers contained in a given space are therefore as nine to seven; in other words, by putting benches instead of pues, there is a gain of about twenty-eight per cent. Now in this instance both pue and bench were evidently planned to hold as many as conveniently might be. Whence then the difference of accommodation?

Again, in S. Michael's Church, Cambridge; in the same area, as before, we find only thirteen pues, and consequently a loss of thirty-eight per cent. by not having benches. It should be observed, that in all these cases it is just possible to kneel.

The difference of accommodation that we have just detected we conceive to arise solely from the different height of the pues and benches, as affecting the facility of kneeling. The pues in S. Michael's are 4 ft. 6 in. high; the pues at Barnwell 3 ft. 6 in., and the benches there 3 ft.

Let us consider what the true theory of kneeling is. To kneel is to touch the ground with the *knees* (τιθέναι γόνατα): this definition of course leaves the question open, whether the body from the knees upward is to be erect or prostrate, or between the two. We of the west are, however, agreed on the *nearly erect* posture, leaving the prostrate to the orientals. But it is found in practice that long-continued erect kneeling, without support, causes such weariness, and even pain, as to render devotion well nigh impossible; and accordingly some support behind or before is usual. In convents the resource is to sit on the heels, a posture of greater rest but also of greater pain<sup>1</sup> than the erect. The modern "hassock" of our pues is a modification of this, especially when it is made very thick (it varies from 6 inches to 2 feet): by this invention the support is divided between the floor under the feet, the hassock in front, and the seat behind. But the more simple, and of old usual resource, is to have a support at a suitable height in front; at such a height, that is, as easily to support the body when slightly inclined forward, and not so low as to make the posture lounging. This appears to be the reasonable and reverential mode of kneeling at our ritual, alike free from distraction through uneasiness, and from drowsiness through over-much ease; and this mode we find fully recognized in the provision for kneeling made in the old oaken benches of our own churches, where such exist, and in the foreign Prie-dieux. It is very remarkable how exceedingly *low*, to our notions, are the

<sup>1</sup> See *Six Weeks in a Convent*.

supports for kneeling at in old benches. In Chester-ton church they are little more than 2 feet high; in S. Michael's, Cambridge, sometimes under 2 feet, i. e. considerably less than breast high for a man of ordinary height; so lowly did they of old time think it became them to bend in prayer.

This view of kneeling leads to results important to our present inquiry. For wherever the support in question is no other than the back of the bench which is in front of the kneeler, as at Chesterton and elsewhere, it follows that that bench must be as high as, and no higher than, such support ought to be: and thus it appears that according to old practice and the reasonable mode of kneeling, *the height of the back of the bench is to be regulated by the convenience of him who kneels at it from behind, not of him who sits in it.* Again, this mode of kneeling causes the person kneeling to lean over the support in front of him; *if then the bench before him be low enough for him to make it his support*, he will kneel at it, leaning partially forward into his neighbour's seat (who will be kneeling also, and therefore not incommoded thereby); *and in this case he may kneel without his bench being made wider from back to front than is required for sitting and standing: but if the pue before him be too high to admit of his using the top of it as his support, then to enable him to kneel at all, the pue he occupies must be made wider than mere sitting and standing require.* And thus it is that the use of low benches causes such a great saving of space. In the case of the Barnwell benches one may kneel





fairest way, *the benches will be the cheaper*. This estimate does not include carving. In re-seating an old church which is already pued, it would be much cheaper to put in oak-benches, since pues involve a new floor, which benches do not; and this is a serious item in the account. We have said that our estimate does not include carving, but we do not mean that there should be none; this will add to the expence for simple poppy-heads about sixteen shillings per bench; for a carved elbow about as much more. But supposing that this expence cannot be met, we throw out this suggestion: In putting oak-benches into a church, have the poppy-heads cut in a general form by the carver, ready for the carver to begin his work. These benches in this state look well (compared with the pue) though unfinished, and the poppy-heads will be gradually in the course of years, as the church is raised. In any parish there would be no objection to their being ere long: indeed, the incomplete benches will be sufficient to awaken the people to think money well bestowed in the arrangements of a church—  
 and an increase.

yourself to purely statistical  
 of OPEN BENCHES; and  
 of argument, INCREASE OF  
 favour, when the *unfitness*,  
*ness*, and the *Puritanick as-*  
 have been dwelt on in vain.









